

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 KINSHA 03802 221437Z

ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W

-----221440Z 068296 /45

O 221225Z APR 77

FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 3180

S E C R E T KINSHAS 3802

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR US UG UN CG

SUBJECT: U.S. RELATIONS WITH UGANDA

REF: STATE 90432 B) KINSHASA 3746 C) STATE 05808

1. PRESIDENT MOBUTU TELEPHONED ME AT 10:30 THIS MORNING TO SAY THAT PRESIDENT AMIN, WHO HAD JUST ARRIVED IN KINSHASA FOR ONE-DAY VISIT, HAD ASKED HIM TO ARRANGE A PRIVATE MEETING WITH ME WITHIN THE NEXT FEW HOURS. MOBUTU SAID THAT SUCH A REQUEST FROM ONE FRIENDLY CHIEF OF STATE TO ANOTHER PLACED HIM IN AN AWKWARD POSITION PERSONALLY AND HE THEREFORE HOPED I COULD AGREE TO THE MEETING, WHICH HE WOULD ASSURE TAKES PLACE IN COMPLETE SECRECY.

2. IN ACCORDANCE WITH REF A, I EXPLAINED TO THE PRESIDENT THAT I WAS NOT AUTHORIZED TO MEET WITH AMIN. WHILE IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE TO CONSULT WASHINGTON AGAIN ON THIS MATTER. THE VERY LIMITED TIME AVAILABLE, AND THE FACT THAT SUCH A QUESTION WOULD OBVIOUSLY HAVE TO BE CONSIDERED AT A HIGH LEVEL, MADE THIS VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE. I REMINDED THE PRESIDENT OF HOW CONTROVERSIAL UGANDA REMAINS IN THE US. I WENT ON TO SAY THAT, FOLLOWING OUR LAST CONVERSATION ON THIS MATTER, I HAD ASKED FOR FURTHER GUIDANCE FROM WASHINGTON AND HAD IN FACT RECEIVED AN ORAL MESSAGE FOR MOBUTU TO PASS TO AMIN. IT WAS NOT, HOWEVER,

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THE POSITIVE KIND OF REPLY THAT I KNEW MOBUTU WANTED TO BE IN A POSITION TO CONVEY.

3. I THEN SAID I REALIZED THE DELICATE SITUATION THIS POSED FOR MOBUTU AND SUGGESTED HE MIGHT CONSIDER TELLING AMIN THAT HE HAD CONVEYED AMIN'S REQUEST TO ME AND THAT IN RESPONSE I HAD MADE CLEAR THAT, WHILE I WAS NOT AUTHORIZED TO MEET PER-

SONALLY WITH AMIN, I HAD PROMISED MOBUTU THAT I WOULD IMMEDIATELY CONSULT WASHINGTON WITH A VIEW TO PROVIDING A MESSAGE TO AMIN. THIS MESSAGE, I SAID, COULD BE SENT EITHER THROUGH MOBUTU OR SOME OTHER CHANNEL AND COULD ADDRESS THE VARIOUS FACTORS AND CONDITIONS WE PERCEIVE RELATING TO POSSIBLE IMPROVEMENT OF RELATIONS. AT THAT POINT MOBUTU ASKED WHAT OUR CONDITIONS ARE FOR NORMALIZATION. I SAID I WAS NOT AWARE OF ALL THE FACTORS, BUT I WAS AUTHORIZED TO STATE THAT IF THERE WERE AN INVESTIGATION OF THE DEATH OF ARCHBISHOP LUWUM, AS PROPOSED BY THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION, AND IF SUCH AN INVESTIGATION PRODUCED POSITIVE RESULTS, THAT WOULD CREATE AN ATMOSPHERE CONDUCIVE TO DISCUSSIONS OF US-UGANDAN RELATIONS. MOBUTU SAID THANK YOU AND HUNG UP, WITHOUT INDICATING WHAT HE INTENDED TO TELL AMIN.

4. COMMENT: DEPARTMENT WILL REALIZE THIS BRIEF EXCHANGE COULD HAVE SUBSEQUENT RAMIFICATIONS. FIRST, I HAVE NO IDEA HOW MOBUTU WILL PLAY THIS WITH AMIN OR, MORE IMPORTANT, HOW THE UNPREDICTABLE AMIN WILL PLAY IT WITH US OR PERHAPS THE MEDIA. EITHER OR BOTH COULD TREAT IT AS A REBUFF. OR AMIN COULD EVEN TRY TO PARLAY IT INTO SOME SORT OF "PROMISE" FROM THE US TO MOVE TOWARD NORMALIZATION. OR -- IF MOBUTU SHOULD TAKE UP MY SUGGESTION OF MERELY INDICATING TO AMIN THAT HE COULD EXPECT SOME MESSAGE FROM US AS A RESULT OF TODAY'S EXCHANGE -- AMIN MAY NOT TRY TO PLAY IT PUBLICLY IN ANY WAY, AT LEAST FOR THE TIME BEING. IN THE MEANTIME, WE WILL DO OUR BEST TO FIND OUT WHAT IN FACT MOBUTU TELLS AMIN AND WILL KEEP THE DEPARTMENT INFORMED.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS, CHIEF OF STATE VISITS, MEETINGS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 22-Apr-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977KINSHA03802
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770140-0614
Format: TEL
From: KINSHASA
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770430/aaaaazer.tel
Line Count: 89
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 13318ea0-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 77 STATE 90432, 77 KINSHASA 3746, 77 STATE 5808
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2727266
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: U.S. RELATIONS WITH UGANDA
TAGS: PFOR, US, UG, CG, UN, (MOBUTU SESE SEKO), (AMIN DADA, IDI)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/13318ea0-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009